

Testimony of Shelagh McClure
Before the Appropriations Committee
On HB 5037
An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the
Biennium Ending June 20, 2023
February 24, 2022

Honorable committee members, my name is Shelagh McClure. I live in West Hartford with my husband and our 31 year-old son who lives with an intellectual disability. I also am the daughter of a 94 year-old mother living with advanced dementia. Our lives make us acutely aware of the importance of a reliable, well-trained workforce of healthcare workers, and how our state is failing to create and sustain such a workforce. I am here today to ask you to add \$150 million to the budget to support Connecticut's safety net.

Direct care workers do the hard work each day, caring for and supporting individuals with a variety of needs. The current rate of pay is not competitive with jobs offered by retailers and other non-healthcare employers. The pandemic has made their job even more difficult and dangerous, and has exacerbated the already high rate of turnover and workers leaving the field. Today, there is a critical shortage of workers, leaving families struggling or unable to meet the needs of their disabled or elderly family member.

Direct care workers have made it possible for elderly persons to stay in their own homes and individuals with disabilities to live successfully in the community—a choice that is essential and highly valued. Should this workforce continue to shrink and fail to be supported by the State, the ability to live in the community is threatened.

The State is responsible for the funding that pays direct care workers' salaries. By providing additional funding to the budget this year, the State can help human services providers establish more competitive salaries, provide more funding for training that provides a career ladder and help avoid wage compression.

This is a necessary step to address an urgent situation. Please support the additional funding for Connecticut safety net.

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